



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Biologist Connects International Researchers with African Smallholders



Curt Van Tassell, USDA

Clet Wandui Masiga is a conservation biologist based in Uganda.

Research is a major pillar of Feed the Future's work on global food security, but by its nature it can take a long time to yield results on the ground: Some researchers estimate that it takes 17 years on average for newly discovered solutions to take hold. Thus, groundbreaking agricultural research requires dedicated scientists working across technical and geographical boundaries over the long term to lead the charge on solutions to hunger, poverty and undernutrition, as well as to help smallholder farmers adopt and access new information and technology as it becomes available.

In Africa, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are helping boost incomes and cultivate a more nutrient-dense food supply under Feed the Future through a program to improve livestock by identifying critical traits that allow African goats to thrive under harsh climate conditions. In order to carry out their work, USDA researchers connect with African programs working directly with smallholder farmers to learn what farmers need and what works best to assist them.

Clet Wandui Masiga, a conservation biologist with the Agro-biodiversity and Biotechnology Program of the [Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa](#), based in Uganda, has become is an interlocutor in this effort to coordinate between the international research community, local African research institutions and individual smallholder communities. Masiga works not only on the science and research aspects of this Feed the Future program, but also on the policy, legal and financial aspects.

"[He is] a uniquely dedicated, collaborative and visionary partner," Jeff Silverstein, National Program Leader for the USDA Agricultural Research Service on the livestock project, says of Masiga. "He writes columns on biotechnology for local and regional news outlets; he contributes to DAD-net [an international animal genetics e-forum] on controversial topics; he tries to influence legal structures in Uganda and throughout Africa through the African Union's Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources; and he is engaged in our work and is continually 'on.' And he has a program portfolio that is very ambitious."

Goats can be an important source of food and livelihood for the most vulnerable people, as they are less expensive to obtain and raise than some larger livestock, like cows. Helping farmers select and breed goats with traits like heat stress tolerance, disease resistance or increased milk production can make a tremendous difference in the lives of smallholder farmers. But these livestock systems need local leaders to build and maintain them so they can be sustainable over time – and that's where people like Masiga come in.

"Feed the Future research projects like this one need African innovation and leadership to yield sustained change," says Silverstein. "We rely on partners like Masiga who have the scientific expertise, are connected to local groups, and have the passion to help communities thrive for generations to come."